

# Technical Quality Assurance

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## Technical Quality Assurance Responsibility

All BWSR grant programs involving technical assistance shall include a clear definition of grant recipient responsibility for Technical Quality Assurance (TQA) in the grant agreement. Grant recipients must identify or document the technical assistance provider(s) according to each grant program policy.

## Constructed Engineering and Ecological Practices and Projects

In order to ensure long-term public benefit of constructed or ecological practices and projects, the following requirements must be met by grant recipients for each practice or project:

- a) **Technical Assistance Provider.** Identify the technical assistance provider(s) for the practice or project and their credentials for providing this assistance. The technical assistance provider(s) must have appropriate credentials for practice investigation, design, and construction. Credentials can include conservation partnership Technical Approval Authority (TAA); applicable professional licensure; reputable vendor with applicable expertise and liability coverage; or other applicable credentials, training, and/or experience.
- b) **Practice Standards.** Ensure the use of appropriate practice standards for design, construction, operation, and maintenance in the project work plan. USDA-NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) practice standards or other applicable standards can be used.
- c) **Practice Certification.** Ensure that the assigned technical assistance provider certifies that the practice or project was installed or constructed in accordance with the applicable plans and specifications, including approved modifications, prior to authorization for payment by the grantee. BWSR review of construction or installation certification will be via spot check and/or grant reconciliation.
- d) **Operation and Maintenance.** Ensure that an appropriate operation and maintenance plan is developed that identifies necessary activities and timing to ensure long-term public benefit of practices and projects. The operation and maintenance plan shall be provided to, and discussed with, the practice or project owner soon after construction or installation certification.
- e) **Periodic Practice/Project Inspection.** Confirm that the operation and maintenance plan is being followed and the project has not been altered or removed by conducting periodic practice/project inspections. The technical assistance provider conducting practice/project inspections may be different than the provider performing practice investigation, design, and construction.

## Incentive Practices and Projects

For practices and projects that involve incentives for landowners or managers to implement management plans, such as nutrient management plans, the grant recipient shall identify or assign the technical assistance provider(s) and document their credentials and ensure operation and maintenance in accordance with the applicable requirements above. Follow up needs and requirements for incentive

practices should be developed to address the intent of the incentive and ensure long-term public benefit. Requirements for practice/project inspections of incentive practices may or may not include additional activities such as reports from the landowner or manager in regards to progress on the management plan. BWSR review will be in accordance with the specific grant program policies and requirements.

## **Identifying Technical Assistance Providers and Practice Standards**

In general, BWSR grants with work plan components require identification of the technical assistance provider(s), or thorough documentation of the method to be used to select appropriate technical assistance provider(s), and practice standards in the grant work plan. This work plan is reviewed and approved by BWSR prior to the execution of the grant agreement. BWSR may also review via spot check, grant monitoring, reconciliation, or verification.

For grants without work plan requirements, the technical assistance provider and practice standards are generally identified as individual practices or projects are approved for funding, or the technical assistance provider may be identified in the grant recipient's local policies. For example, in the Erosion Control and Water Management Program, the Soil and Water Conservation District Board must identify the practice standards and may identify the technical assistance provider when approving a specific conservation practice contract. Or, the Board may annually identify a staff member with appropriate credentials as the technical assistance provider for all of a certain type of practice to be constructed that year. BWSR review will occur via spot check, grant monitoring, reconciliation, or verification.

See also Project Assurance information for grant recipients.